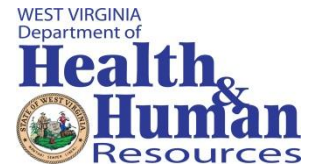


# West Virginia **ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES (ACEs)**

Daniel M. Christy, MPA, CPRP, Director  
WV Health Statistics Center  
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# What are ACEs?

## **A**dverse **C**hildhood **E**xperience

An adverse childhood experience, or ACE, describes a **traumatic event** in a person's life occurring before the age of 18 that the person recalls as an adult.

# What are ACEs? (continued)



## Adverse Childhood Experiences

ACEs are experiences in childhood that are unhappy, unpleasant and/or hurtful.



ACEs are sometimes referred to as toxic stress or childhood trauma.

An ACE is defined as surviving any of the following categories of abuse, neglect, or loss prior to age 18:

- Emotional abuse by a parent
- Physical abuse by a parent
- Sexual abuse by anyone
- Emotional neglect
- Physical neglect
- Loss of a parent
- Growing up with an alcohol and/or drug abuser in the household
- Living with a family member experiencing mental illness
- Experiencing the incarceration of a household member

Several ACE studies reveal strong relationships between ACEs and many later-life health risks and conditions. For example, higher ACE scores are associated with obesity, substance abuse, depression and lung, heart and liver disease. ACEs are also linked to homelessness and criminal justice involvement.

Integral Theory explains how ACEs can derail developmental processes as well as how community resources that foster resilience can help restore healthy development.

# Health Problems Associated with ACE

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC, 2014), ACEs are associated with the following risk factors, chronic disease, and health outcomes:

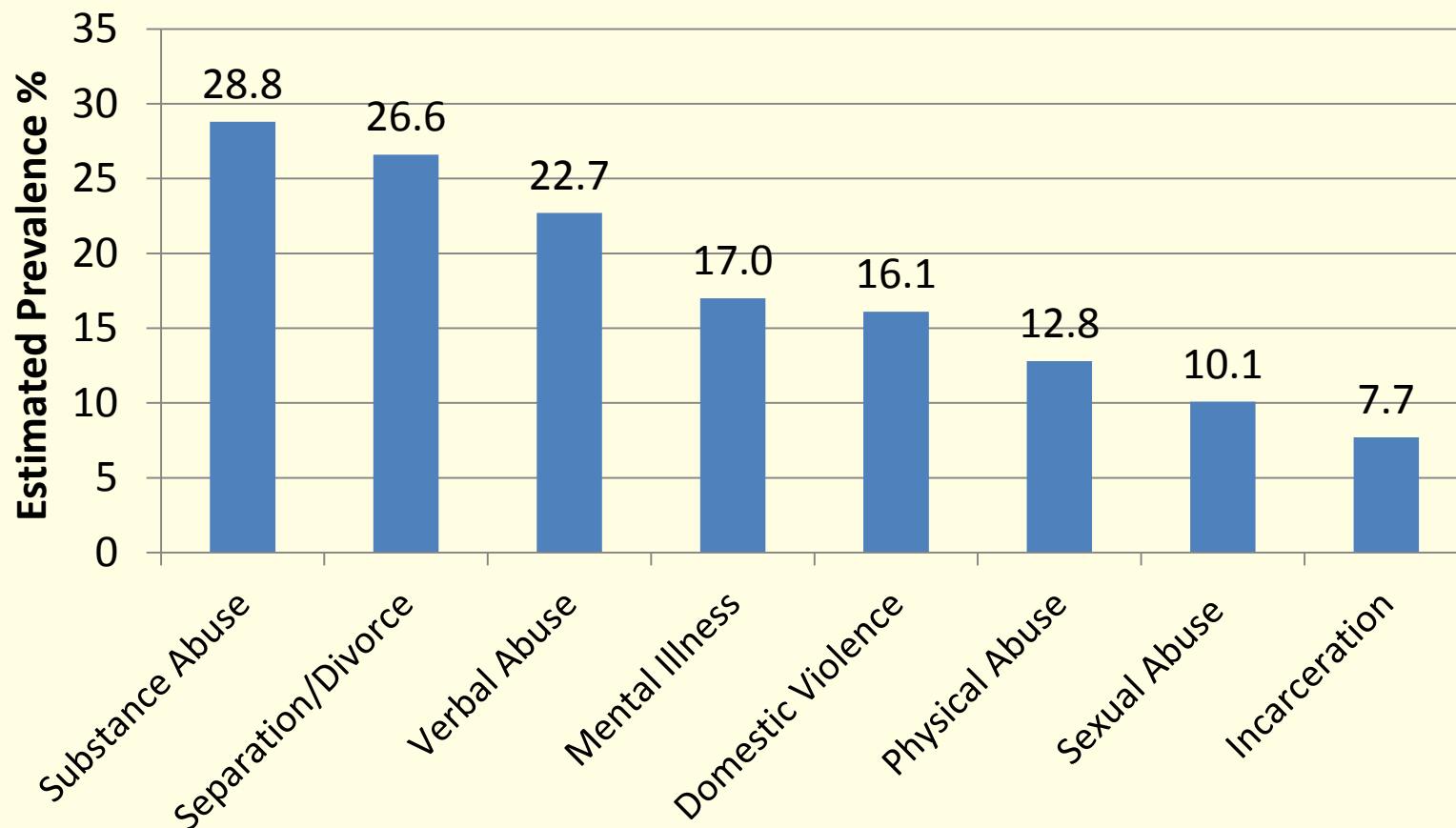
- Alcoholism and alcohol abuse
- Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease
- Depression
- Fetal death
- Health-related quality of life
- Illicit drug use
- Ischemic heart disease
- Risk for intimate partner violence
- Liver disease
- Multiple sexual partners
- Sexually transmitted diseases
- Smoking
- Suicide attempts
- Unintended pregnancies
- Early initiation of smoking
- Early initiation of sexual activity
- Adolescent pregnancy

There is a total of 11 questions on the ACE module of the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) questionnaire. The 11 questions were combined to create 8 categories. The household alcohol and drug use questions were combined to create a household substance abuse category. The 3 questions on sexual abuse and rape were combined to create a sexual abuse category. The final 8 categories are:

- Substance Abuse
- Separation/Divorce
- Verbal Abuse
- Mental Illness
- Domestic Violence
- Physical Abuse
- Sexual Abuse
- Incarceration

# Types of ACEs Among West Virginia Adults

## Prevalence of Adverse Childhood Experiences Among West Virginia Adults, 2014

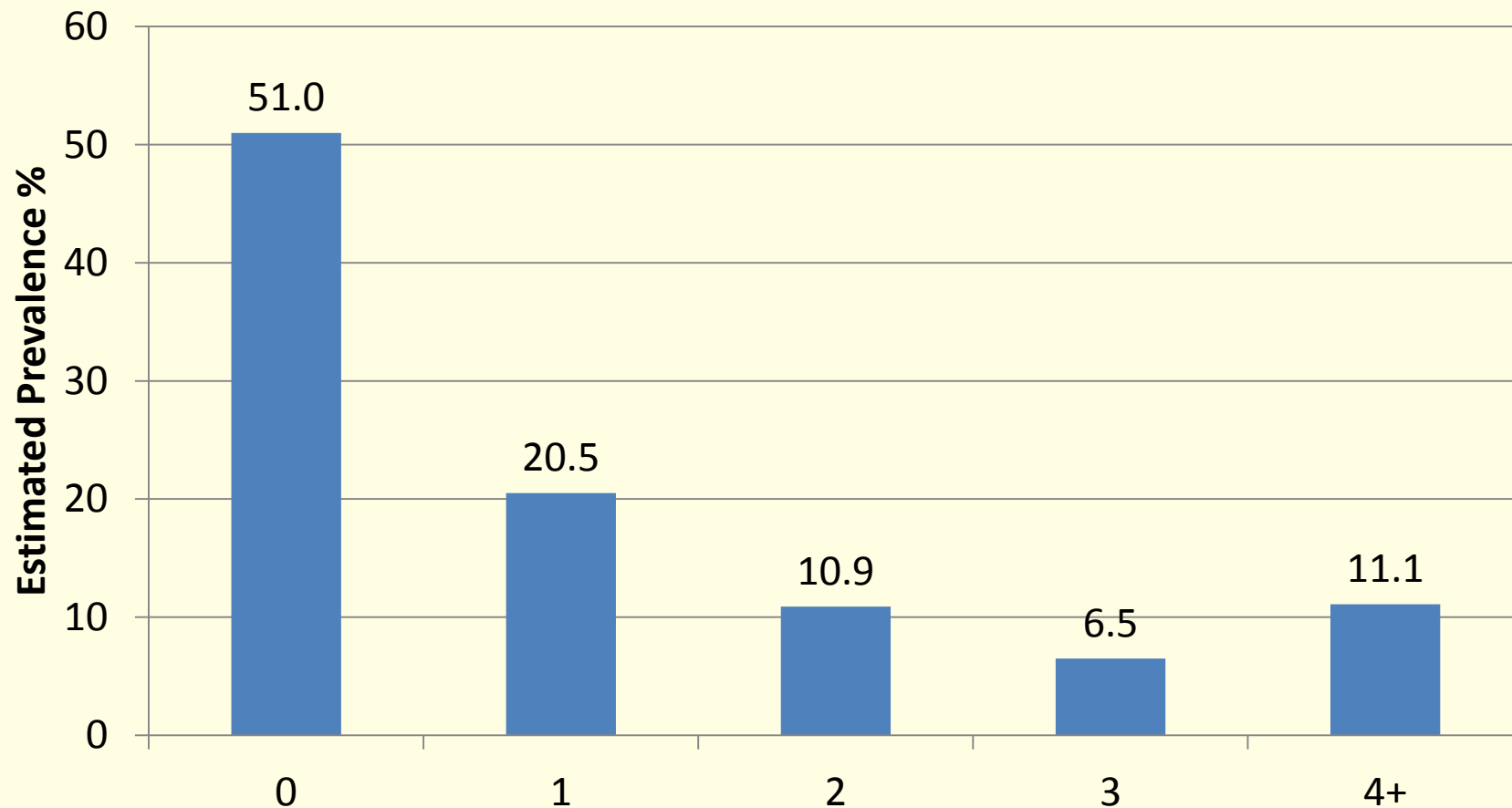


Data Source: WV Health Statistics Center, Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System



# Number of ACEs Among West Virginia Adults

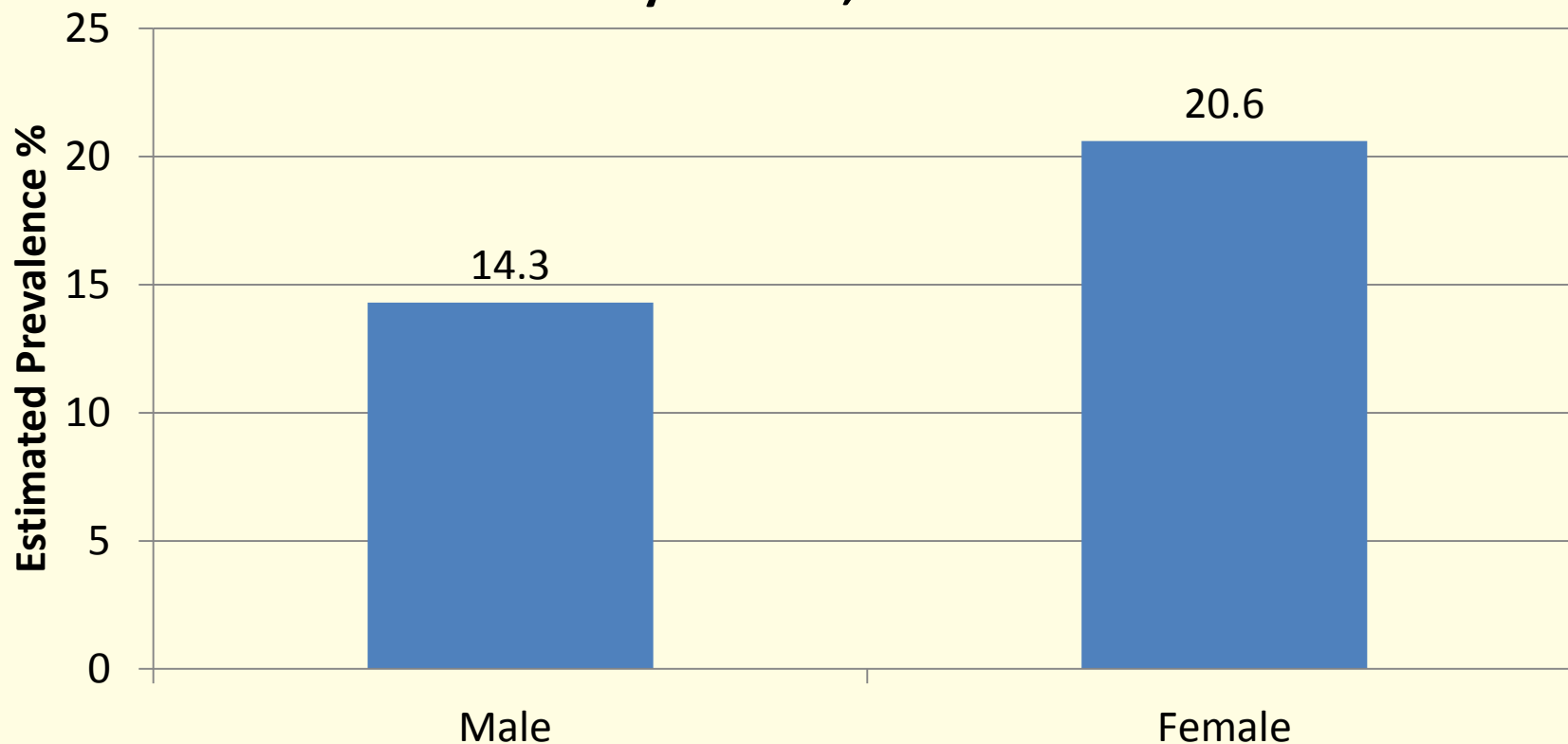
## Number of Adverse Childhood Experiences Reported Among West Virginia Adults, 2014



Data Source: WV Health Statistics Center, Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System

# High Risk by Gender

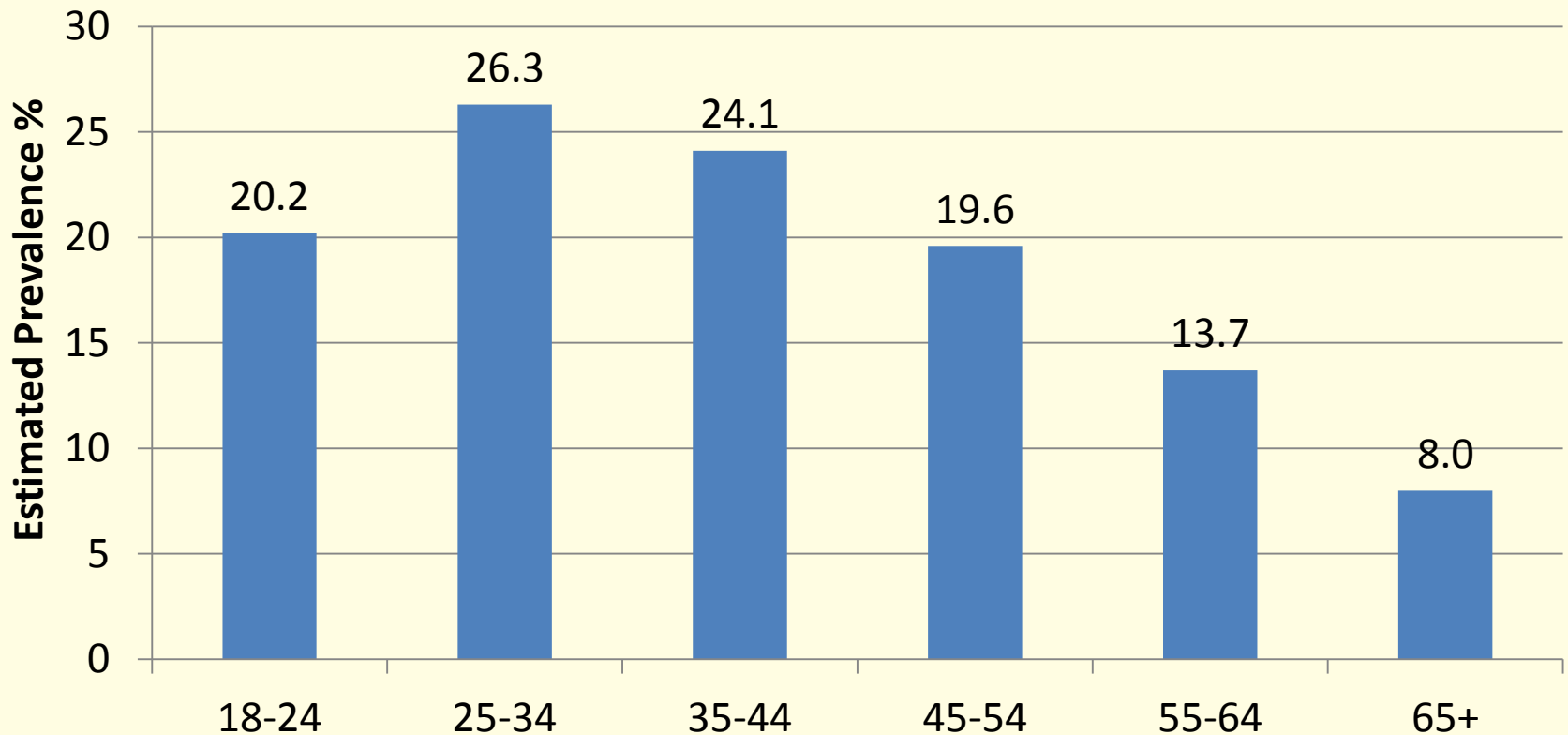
**Prevalence of High Risk Among West Virginia Adults  
by Gender, 2014**



Data Source: WV Health Statistics Center, Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System

# High Risk by Age

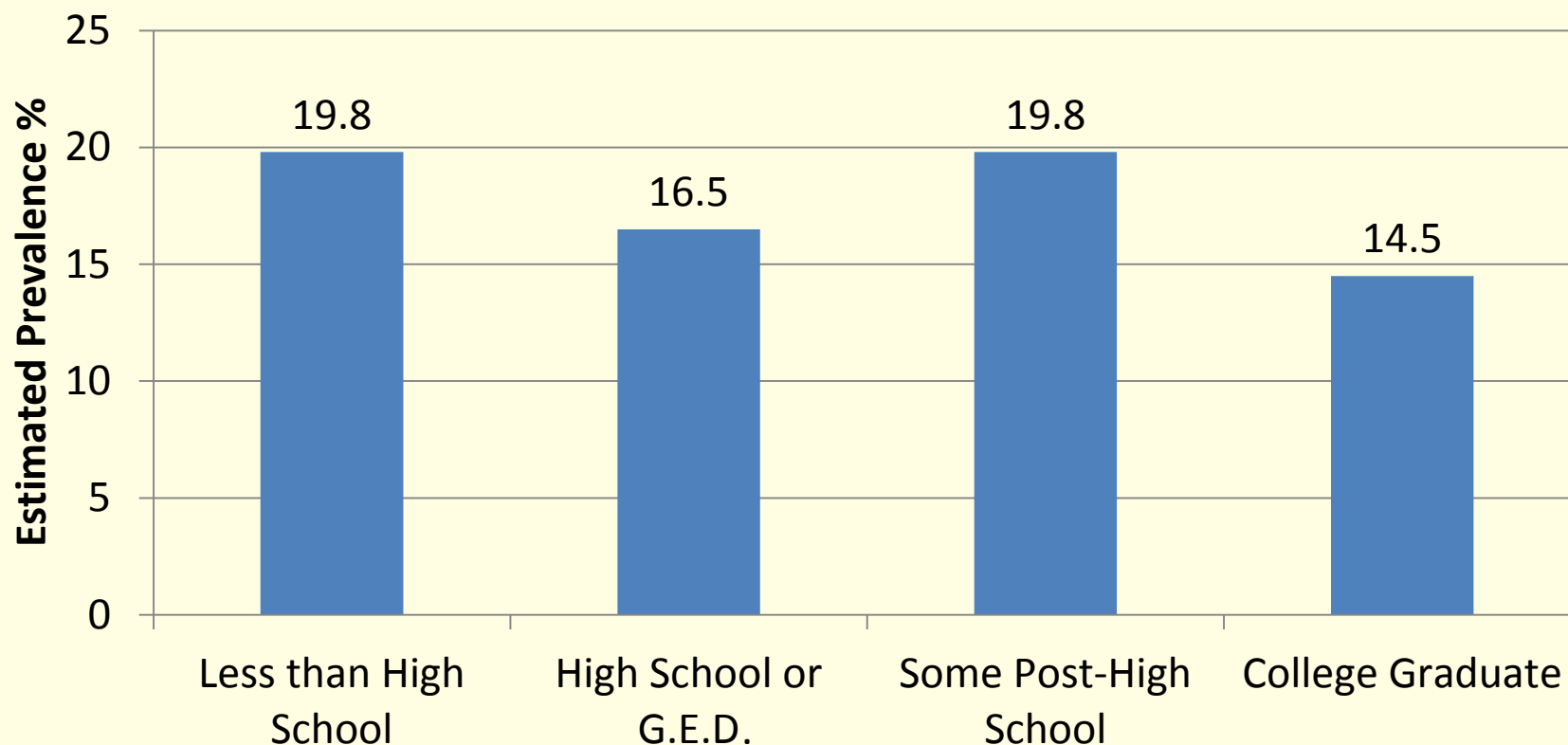
## Prevalence of High Risk Among West Virginia Adults by Age Group, 2014



Data Source: WV Health Statistics Center, Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System

# High Risk by Education

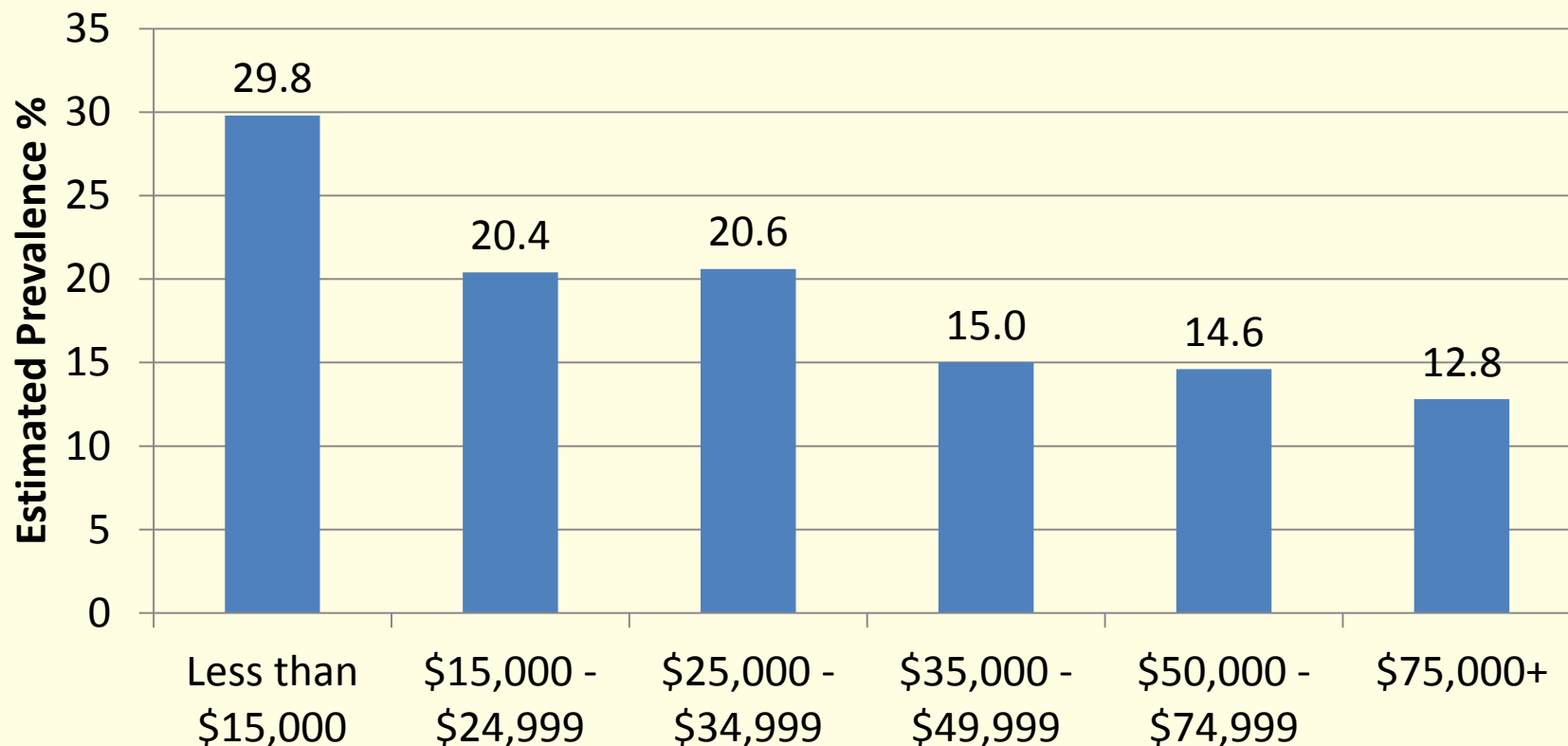
## Prevalence of High Risk Among West Virginia Adults by Education, 2014



Data Source: WV Health Statistics Center, Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System

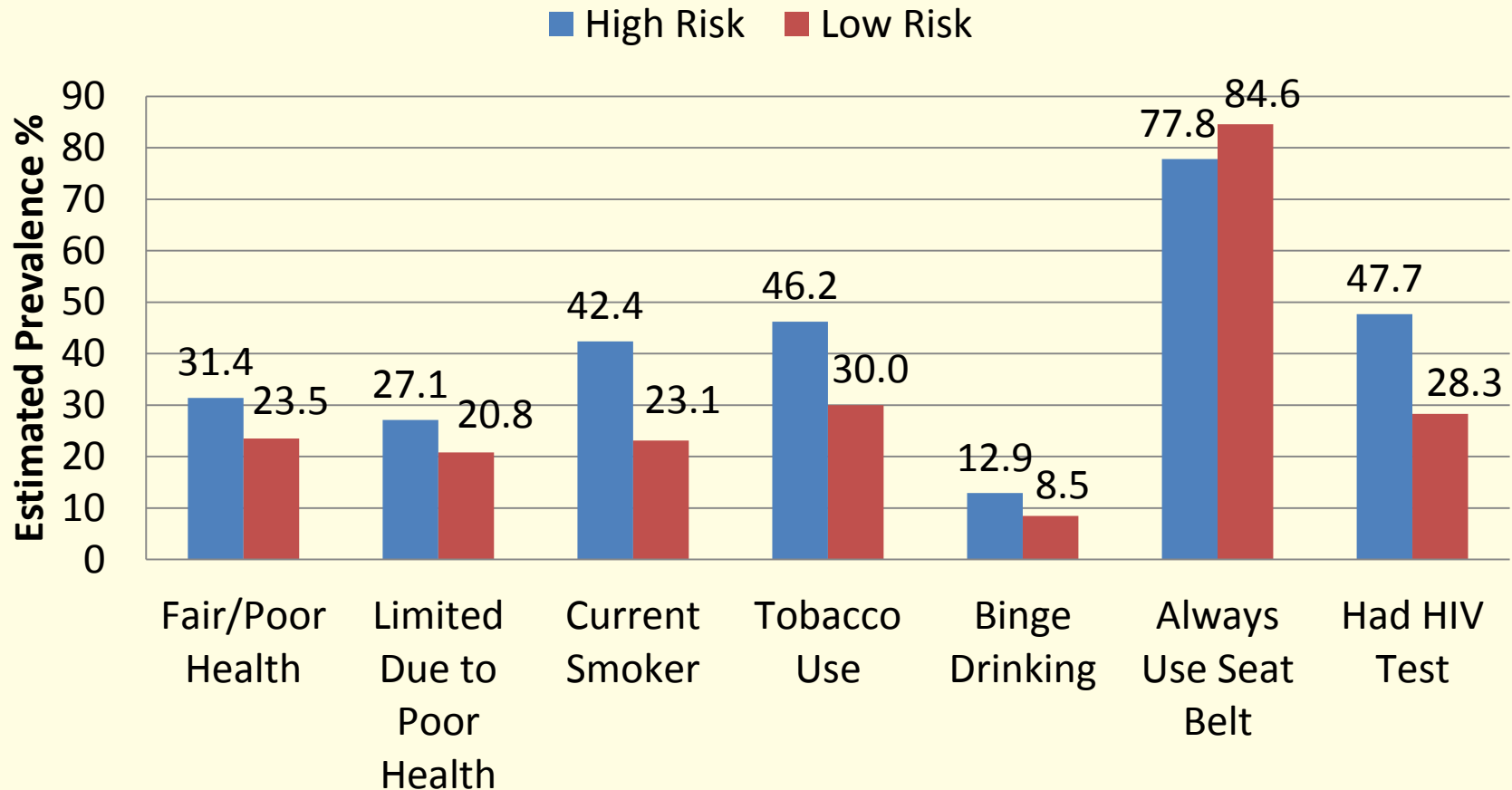
# High Risk by Income

## Prevalence of High Risk Among West Virginia Adults by Income, 2014

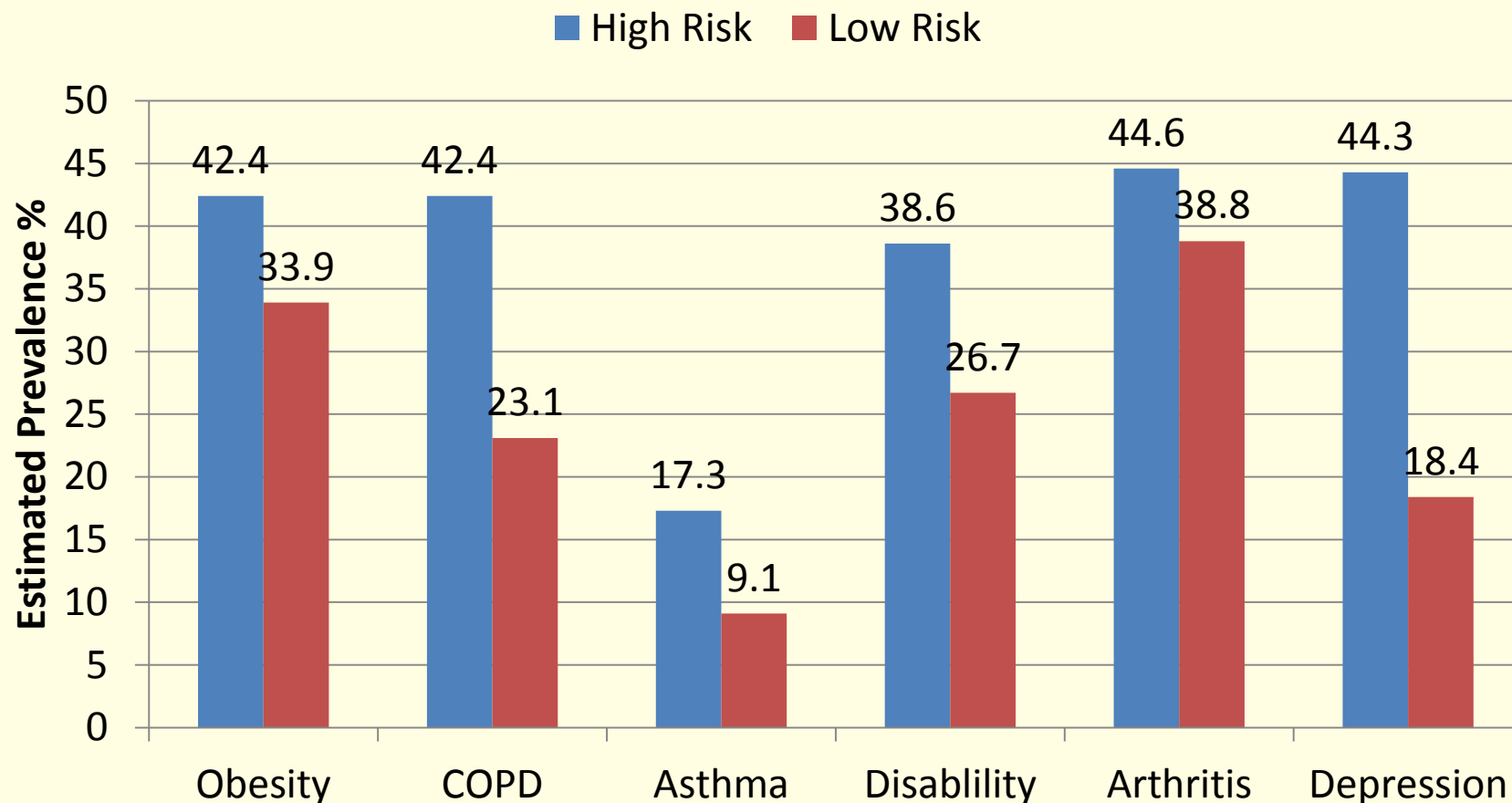


Data Source: WV Health Statistics Center, Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System

## Comparison of Health Risk Behavior Among Those at High Risk from ACEs and Those at Low Risk from ACEs



## Comparison of Chronic Diseases Among Those at High Risk from ACEs and Those at Low Risk from ACEs



# Conclusions

West Virginia adults reported an average of 1.2 ACEs during their childhood and more than half report zero ACEs. In West Virginia, the most common ACE was household substance abuse, followed by separation/divorce, verbal abuse, mental illness, domestic violence, physical abuse, sexual abuse, and incarceration of a household member.

Approximately 17.6% or 228,739 West Virginia adults would be considered high risk for having or developing health problems based on having three or more ACEs.



# Conclusions (continued)

West Virginia's statistics are comparable to the CDC's findings in that multiple ACEs are associated with fair/poor health, current smoking, binge drinking, obesity, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, depression, and disability.

These findings lay a foundation for prevention of chronic disease and unhealthy behaviors based on modification or avoidance of ACEs.

# What Can Reduce ACE Impacts?

What types of community and family skills reduce ACEs?

- Nurturing and positive relationships
- Knowledge of parenting and child development
- Parental resilience
- Social connections
- Concrete support in time of need

# More Information and Resources

National Center for Trauma-Informed Care

[www.mentalhealth.samhsa.gov/nctic](http://www.mentalhealth.samhsa.gov/nctic)

National Child Traumatic Stress Network

[www.nctsnet.org](http://www.nctsnet.org)

Center for the Study of Social Policy - Information on  
Strengthening Families and Protective Factors

[www.cssp.org](http://www.cssp.org)

Center for Injury Prevention and Control

[www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention](http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention)

West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources  
Bureau for Public Health  
Health Statistics Center  
350 Capitol Street, Room 165  
Charleston, WV 25301  
[www.wvdhhr.org/bph/hsc](http://www.wvdhhr.org/bph/hsc)

Daniel Christy, Director  
[daniel.m.christy@wv.wv.gov](mailto:daniel.m.christy@wv.wv.gov)  
(304) 356-4186

Tonya Yablonsky, Epidemiologist  
[Tonya.a.yablonsky@wv.gov](mailto:Tonya.a.yablonsky@wv.gov)  
(304) 356-4187